

REMARKS

Claims 1-3, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17-26, 28 and 29 are pending in this application.

By this Amendment, claims 1, 11, 15, 17 and 18 are amended as requested by the Examiners during the personal interview. Support for the amendments to claims 1, 11, 15, 17 and 18 can be found at least in Fig. 1 of Applicants' specification. No new matter is added.

The courtesies extended to Applicant's representative by Examiners Chen and Kacker at the interview held August 5, 2008, are appreciated. The reasons presented at the interview as warranting favorable action are incorporated into the remarks below, which constitute Applicants' record of the interview.

Claims 1, 11, 15, 17 and 18 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Reiji et al. (JP 04-002118) in view of Kobori et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,743,967). The rejection is respectfully traversed.

Reiji and Kobori, alone or in any permissible combination, do not teach or render obvious every claimed feature of independent claims 1, 11, 15, 17 and 18. Reiji and Kobori do not teach or render obvious "notches which are formed by notching inner circumferential surfaces of the ring-like plates, the inner circumferential surfaces being opposite to the support columns, on a periphery of the support columns, the support columns being fitted into the notches and being disposed inside an outer periphery of the ring-like plates," as recited in independent claims 1, 11, 15, 17 and 18 (emphasis added).

As argued during the personal interview, the alleged columns 10 of Reiji are not fitted into notches (see Fig. 5 of Reiji). Rather, these alleged columns 10 are formed in the middle of the body of the ring-shaped baffle plate 30 (see Fig. 5 of Reiji). Therefore, Reiji does not teach or suggest notches formed by notching the inner circumferential surface of a ring-like plate and support columns fitted into the notches, as recited in independent claims 1, 11, 15, 17 and 18.

Kobori does not remedy the above-described deficiencies of Reiji. During the personal interview, the Examiners asserted that the cutouts 402, corrective frames 401 and boat pillars 403 of Kobori correspond to the claimed notches, ring-like plates and support columns, respectively, as recited in independent claims 1, 11, 15, 17 and 18. However, as shown in Fig. 4A of Kobori, the boat pillars 403 of Kobori are disposed outside of an outer periphery of the corrective frames 401. Therefore, as tentatively agreed during the personal interview, Kobori does not teach or render obvious "the support columns being fitted into the notches and being disposed inside an outer periphery of the ring-like plates," as recited in independent claims 1, 11, 15, 17 and 18 (emphasis added).

As requested by the Examiners during the personal interview, a brief description of some of the advantages of the claimed invention relative to Reiji and Kobori will be discussed below.

The invention claimed in independent claims 1, 11, 15, 17 and 18 is formed by notching the inner circumferential surface of the ring-like plate, and fitting the support columns into these notches. However, the structures of Reiji and Kobori require holes to be formed in the middle of the alleged ring-like plate, which leads to increased manufacturing expenses and a more complicated design (see page 25, line 8 - page 26, line 7 of Applicants' specification).

Further, in contrast to the structure of Reiji and Kobori, the claimed structure of independent claims 1, 11, 15, 17 and 18 allow for no part of the ring-like plate to be present between the support column and the periphery of the substrate (see Fig. 1 of Applicants' specification). Therefore, conductance may be increased at the location where the support column and substrate-mounting portion are present (see page 28, line 4 - page 30, line 15 of Applicants' specification).

Further, the claimed structure allows for a gas flow rate to increase where the support column and substrate mounting portion exist, as compared to the structure of Reiji and Kobori, where the alleged support columns pass through the ring-like plate. Thus, according to the claimed invention, a film thickness of the mounted substrate can remain even across the substrate (see page 28, line 4 - page 30, line 15 of Applicants' specification).

Therefore, for at least these reasons, independent claims 1, 11, 15, 17 and 18 are patentable over the alleged combination of Reiji and Kobori. Applicants thus respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection.

Claims 2, 6 and 19-26 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Reiji in view of Kobori and further in view of Minami et al. (JP 2001-168175); and claim 3 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Reiji in view of Kobori and further in view of Minami and Osaka et al. (U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0070095). The rejections are respectfully traversed.

Minami and Osaka do not remedy the above-described deficiencies of Reiji and Kobori. Minami is applied by the Office Action only for its alleged teaching of substrate mounting portions (see Office Action, page 7). Osaka is applied by the Office Action only for its alleged teaching of substrate mounting portions being inclined downward toward an inside of the ring-like plates in a diameter direction (see Office Action, page 8). Further, claims 2, 3, 6 and 19-26 variously depend from independent claims 1, 11 and 15. Therefore, claims 2, 3, 6 and 19-26 are patentable for at least their dependency on independent claims 1, 11 and 15, as well as for the additional features they recite. Applicants thus respectfully request withdrawal of the rejections.

Claims 8, 9, 12 and 14 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Reiji in view of Kobori and further in view of Ishii et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,820,683). The rejection is respectfully traversed.

Reiji, Kobori and Ishii, alone or in any permissible combination, do not teach or render obvious every claimed feature of claims 8, 9, 12 and 14. As argued during the personal interview, Reiji and Kobori do not teach or render obvious the support columns are composed into an approximately semi-columnar shape, as recited in claims 8 and 12.

As acknowledged on page 9 of the Office Action, and as argued during the personal interview, Ishii teaches the use of semi-cylindrical support columns, and not semi-columnar support columns (see Fig. 5 of Ishii). Therefore, Ishii also does not teach or render obvious support columns that are composed into an approximately semi-columnar shape, as recited in claims 8 and 12.

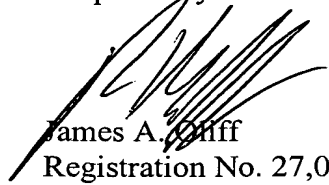
Therefore, for at least these reasons, claims 8 and 12 are patentable over any alleged combination of Reiji, Kobori and Ishii. Claims 9 and 14, which respectively depend from claims 8 and 12 are also patentable over Reiji, Kobori and Ishii, for at least their dependency on claims 8 and 12, as well as for the additional features they recite. Applicants thus respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection.

For similar reasons, claims 28 and 29 are patentable over any alleged combination of Reiji, Kobori and Ishii.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

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